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PHILIPPINES

SUCCESS STORY

Beyond Electricity



The water is cleaner and more accessible now in Barangay Chua, thanks to USAID's AMORE program

Despite the abundant water in Samira's place in Barangay Chua, an upland village in the town of Bagumbayan in Sultan Kudarat in the Philippines' southernmost island of Mindanao, water remains a problem to many.

Says Haron Ibad, a community resident and a former combatant of the Moro National Liberation Front, a Muslim secessionist group, women spend most of the day washing clothes and dishes in the river far from their houses. In fact, he adds, every summer, many families are forced to relocate near the river, where they would also bathe and do their other toilet needs, thus polluting the water with human waste and causing a high incidence of diarrhea and other digestive problems.

Happily, though, the water woes of a hundred households in six water-scarce areas in Chua are now a thing of the past. They can now fetch water from 18 faucets located in accessible sites in the village—water that they can safely drink and use

for their daily needs. This spring-fed, gravity-type potable water system was funded by the Japanese government, through its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects under its Official Development Assistance.

The grant was secured with help from the Alliance for Mindanao Off-grid Renewable Energy (AMORE), a rural electrification program of the United States Agency for International Development that is being implemented by Winrock International with support from the Philippine Department of Energy, Mirant Philippines, and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

AMORE is developing a microhydro power facility in Chua that is expected to produce 9 kilowatts of electricity for 78 consumers in 50 households, three schools, one community center, one health clinic, three commercial establishments, 20 streetlights, and a battery charging station. Having seen how badly the people needed access to safe water, however, AMORE went out of its way to look for additional funds for a potable water system for the community. Through AMORE's efforts and Japanese funding, Chua has become the first village in Asia to benefit from the U.S.-Japan Clean Water for People Initiative.

Set to manage the system is the village's Barangay Renewable Energy and Community Development Association or BRECDA, the association of AMORE's electrification beneficiaries that it organized and trained to operate and maintain the power system that it is installing in the community. To maintain the potable water system, its users will be asked to pay the BRECDA a monthly fee of PhP10 per household.

The people are not complaining. Says Ibad, "Even if the monthly fee is raised to PhP20 or PhP30, we won't mind because this potable water system is a big help to us."